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Letter dated 2 February 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to draw your attention to several incidents of Palestinian terrorism which have claimed the lives of four Israelis in the past week.

On the evening of Thursday, 25 January 2001, 45-year-old Jerusalem resident, Akiva Pashkos, was shot dead near the Atarot industrial zone, just north of the city. Pashkos, who worked as a manager in a tissue factory in Atarot, had taken several Arab workers from the factory to the A-Ram junction in his van and dropped them off at about 6.30 p.m. On his way back, at the southern entrance to Atarot, close to the Arab village of Bir Naballah, several shots were fired at his car, and he was fatally wounded. Soldiers who raced to the scene also came under fire from the gunmen, but there were no casualties. The area of the Atarot industrial zone has been the scene of repeated shooting, stone-throwing, and firebombing attacks over the past four months.

On Monday, 29 January, 55-year-old Arieh Hershkovitz, a father of four and a grandfather of four, died in a hail of bullets fired from a passing vehicle as he drove on the highway between the Rama junction and Adam (Geva Binyamin). Hershkovitz was travelling to the town of Beit El when he stopped to pick up Yonathan Ben-Ami, who was hitchhiking home. The pair were travelling east when terrorists in a red vehicle opened fire at their car and fled towards the nearby Palestinian-controlled area. At least three bullets passed through the car's windshield, fatally wounding Hershkovitz. Ben-Ami was unhurt and managed to escape and alert the authorities.

The third victim was 23-year-old Lior Attiah, an Israeli civilian from the northern town of Afula, who was fatally shot yesterday, 1 February, on the outskirts of the Palestinian-controlled town of Jenin. Reports indicate that Attiah, who was accompanied by a friend, Mohammad Zuabi of Nazareth, was supposed to be meeting Palestinian acquaintances to pick up his car. The meeting took place on a side road, about 100 metres from a Palestinian police checkpoint. Upon arrival, Attiah was shot in the head, chest and stomach by Palestinian gunmen before being evacuated to a hospital in Jenin. From there, he was transferred to the Israeli Defence Forces and then on to a hospital in Afula where he died shortly thereafter.

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Zuabi managed to get away, making it back to the Israeli army checkpoint where he reported the incident.

In the most recent attack, Dr. Shmuel Gillis, a 42-year-old father of five, was murdered as he returned home from Jerusalem in his car. A senior physician at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, Dr. Gillis was travelling south from Jerusalem shortly before 8 p.m. when Palestinian gunmen fired at least 10 bullets into his car, hitting him in the neck and chest and causing the car to overturn by the side of the road.

These murders, which have taken place amidst intensive negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians at Taba, Egypt, are the four latest in a steady series of attacks directed at Israeli civilians in recent weeks. I have detailed these attacks in a number of letters addressed to you, most recently in my letter dated 25 January 2001 (A/55/748-S/2001/81), which recalled the murders of Motti Dayan and Etgar Zeitouny near the Palestinian-controlled town of Tulkarm, and in my letter of 23 January 2001 (A/55/742-S/2001/71) which detailed the murders of Ofir Rahum and Ronni Tsalah. These attacks followed a series of bombings in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv and other locations which killed six Israelis and wounded well over 60 and which were reported in my letters dated 28 December 2000 (A/55/719-S/2000/1252), 22 November 2000 (A/55/641-S/2000/1114), 20 November 2000 (A/55/634-S/2000/1108), and 2 November 2000 (A/55/540-S/2000/1065). These latest murders bring to 51 the total of Israelis killed in terrorist attacks since the outbreak of violence in late September.

The recent wave of attacks has targeted Israeli civilians who were engaged in entirely peaceful activities. Increasingly, Israelis in all areas of the country have become targets as they travel on roads, use public transportation, shop in the marketplace, and even sit peacefully in their homes. The Palestinian Authority has done virtually nothing to curb the violence, and in fact continues to encourage it through official media outlets and other means.

Israel therefore continues to hold the Palestinian Authority responsible for these attacks, in light of both the Palestinian Authority's ongoing incitement to violence as well as the fundamental commitment made by Palestinian Authority Chairman Yassir Arafat in his letter of 9 September 1993, which formed the bedrock for more than seven years of peacemaking. In the letter, Chairman Arafat committed the Palestinian leadership to peacefully resolving the conflict and to renouncing the use of violence and terrorism. More importantly, Chairman Arafat resolved to ensure the compliance of all elements and personnel under his authority, to prevent violations and discipline violators.

The failure of the Palestinian leadership to abide by this commitment has directly contributed to the outbreak of violence and to the proliferation of terrorist attacks in recent months. A final peace settlement can only be sustained by a fundamental commitment to non-violence and Israel calls upon the Palestinian leadership to reaffirm its allegiance to that principle.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 164, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative